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Family Recollections

1880

“THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY!”

EXODUS, Chapter 20, Verse 14.

“THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST
THY NEIGHBOR!”

EXODUS, Chapter 20, Verse 16.

MARY RODER,

AT PRESENT SAILING UNDER THE BOGUS NAME
OF **Widow (?) Stetefeldt,**

A Priestess of Free Love.

Extracts from an article in the “ST. LOUIS VOLKSSTIMME DES
WESTENS,” showing the ways and means

A LUSTFUL AND DEGRADED WOMAN

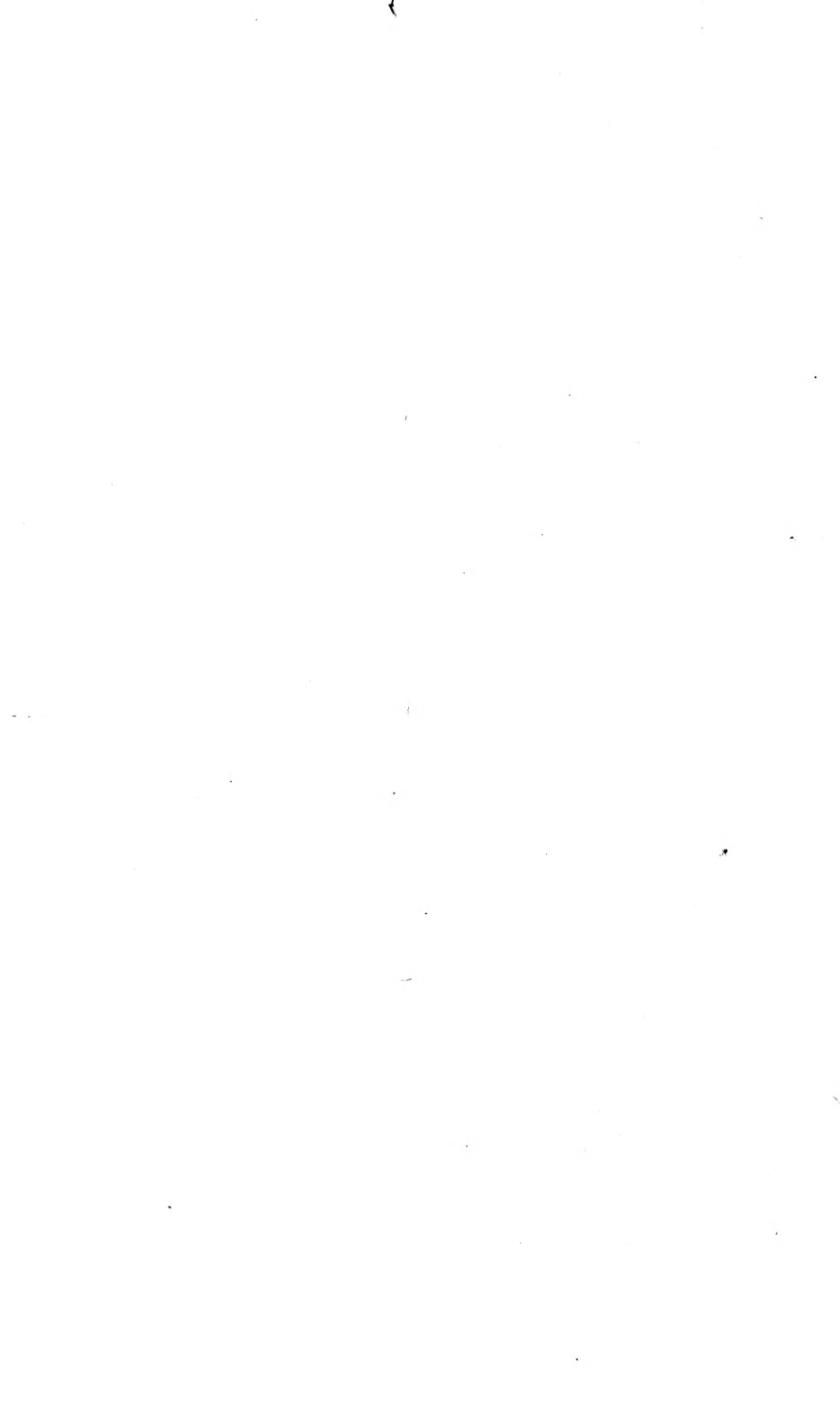
Is able to resort to in order to accomplish her

FRIVOLOUS PURPOSES.



NEW ORLEANS.

1880.



RG 11M.7

The following is a true picture of life. It shows such an excess of female depravity and such coldblooded scoundrelism of a purse-proud upstart, shrinking at no means to hush up his sister's infamy, that it becomes necessary to expose on public pillory, by this pamphlet, the malefactors who seem to stand outside the pale of human justice.

Mr. H. von Werthern, a well known and much respected member of this community, married in May 1871 the then widow MARY STETEFELT, mother of three ungrown children and owner of the small house in the sixth district, she then was living in.

For about six years the married couple had lived comparatively contented together, when there came a sad change. But to understand better the later events it is necessary to relate an occurrence which happened in 1876.

A certain Mr. GERARD owed to Mr. H. von Werthern the sum of \$558 salary, for which he [G.] was in arrears. Having been urged for payment several times, he finally, in February 1876, handed to Mr. von Werthern a very doubtful note for \$50, with 50 0/10 discount, as payment on account. After much trouble and loss of time, Mr. von Werthern collected the note and credited Mr. Gerard with \$25. The latter afterwards called on Mr. von Werthern and demanded those \$25. It is not to be wondered at, that this conduct exasperated him and that when Mr. Gerard grew impudent, he threw him out of doors. To revenge himself, Mr. Gerard swore to an affidavit against him for embezzlement. In absence of the main witnesses for the defence, Mr. von Werthern was forced to trial and pronounced "guilty" by a beastly stupid and corrupt jury, and sentenced to one years' confinement in the State prison.

One of these jurymen—Mr. Fred. Bartels—afterwards declared, unsolicited, in the presence of witnesses, that he had considered Mr. von Werthern "not guilty" of the crime accused of, but that he had yielded to the dictate of the foreman of that jury who, right or wrong, was determined on having Mr. von Werthern condemned:

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that he was sorry for it, etc. [Other members of that jury have made similar expressions.—]

The friends of Mr. von Werthern laid the case, with unimpeachable proofs of his innocence, before Governor Kellogg, but as the latter could not grant a full pardon, the Senate then not being in session, he changed the sentence to ten days confinement in the Parish prison which having already expired, Mr. von Werthern was released.

Shortly afterwards Mr. Gerard's perjurious tongue was paralyzed by palsy, and four or five months later a second paralytic stroke ended his earthly career. About this time Mr. von Werthern's wife showed signs of a material change in her conduct. She manifested a rude, overbearing and quarrelsome disposition towards her husband, attended, without his knowledge or consent, pic-nics, fairs, exhibitions, moon-light excursions, and even strolled to the Fire Engine houses of Jefferson City in search of pleasure, while her husband had to stay at home and take care of the house. He had to rise and open the street-door for her, when, after midnight or near break of day, she returned home from her pleasure trips; and to avoid insult he did not dare to utter a word of reproach or discontent.

Benign and noble as the traits of character of a *virtuous* woman present themselves, yet a *vicious* woman, once on her downward course, knows no limit to her depravity.

Mrs. von Werthern, *alias* widow Stetefeldt, *alias* Mary Roder, grew bolder by the forbearing indulgence of her husband. She openly boasted to some of her lady friends that besides her husband she had six paramours, and that she wanted "*to get rid of her husband and replace him by a young and active man.*"

She gradually grew so void of shame that she openly received her lovers in her husband's presence, until finally he accepted a situation that kept him temporarily away from home. Before leaving home he told her, in presence of witnesses, where he went to and for what purpose, and that he would return, occasionally, whenever his time would allow it.

On September 29, 1877 he left home and on October 6, 1877 his wife brought a suit for divorce against him, stating in her petition that he had left her already for *several months* [while, really, he had been absent but seven days, from September 29, to October 6,] and had abandoned her entirely, that he had ill-treated her and been convicted and sentenced to an infamous punishment, etc. She had expected that he would not answer her petition and that she might obtain against him a judgement by default. But, although under those circumstances a separation from her ought to have been desirable to him, yet he deemed it his duty to defend himself as the accusations concerning his conduct towards her, were utterly false, and because of his unjust conviction. He answered her petition accordingly, but she, conceiving that she had no "legal" cause for a divorce, determined to manufacture one *by putting up a job* by which to reach the desired end. With the assistance of her mother and that of policeman RAPP—one of her paramours—she carried out, on the evening of October 31, 1877, the infernal plot she had concocted.

When on that evening Mr. von Werthern after one month's labor had received the wages he had earned by the sweat of his brow, and repaired home to offer to his wife the means for her and her children's support, he was received by her in a most provoking, abusive and brutal manner. He turned back, intending to go away again, but that would have crossed her plans. As preconcerted, the moment he approached she dispatched her daughter Mary Stetefeldt to the police station, while she detained him until the expected and pre-arranged arrival from the station of her paramour—policeman "Rapp."

Therefore, she changed her tactics and coaxed him to stay and sit down, as she wanted to have a square talk with him. This he did, conversing about indifferent matters until she, thinking the time for her lover approach to have arrived, abused him again, and when once more he attempted to leave, she like a fury suddenly seized him by the collar of his coat and shouted lustily: "Murder! Police! Watch!"

This was the cue for her mother to appear suddenly on the stage, coming from the adjoining room, armed with a poker. With this

weapon she unmercifully belabored her son-in-law while his wife held him with a firm clutch, shouting all the while: "Police! Murder!" In her impatience this female fiend had commenced too soon, the police had not arrived yet, and Mr. von Werthern succeeded finally in wresting the poker from the old fury's hands and threw it through the door, whereupon that she-tiger *seized a large carving-knife and extinguished the light.* Again Mr. von Werthern felt the clutches of his wife on him, but by a sudden jerk he freed himself from her and thus succeeded in making his escape from death by the hands of his mother-in-law. He went at once to the police station applying for protection, but instead of finding that, he was arrested by *those police ruffians* acting in concert with those degraded women.

On the day following, November 1st, his wife falsely swore to an affidavit, charging him with "assault and battery with attempt to kill." [On that very same day she and her like-wise perjured mother—good and pious Catholics that they were—had gone to confession, and on the day after went to communion.]

This affidavit was then also, in form of a supplementary petition, added to her original petition for divorce.

This diabolic plan was so well carried through that it was almost sure of success. But even the most cunning criminals often overlook a trifle by which they are detected finally. So it proved to be in this instance. The plotting woman forgot to close the outside shutters, and it being night and light burning inside, there were witnesses who had observed the whole fracas from the outside.

Great was therefore her consternation when [on February 1 and 5, 1878] her divorce case was being tried, and those witnesses, unimpeachable for their veracity, gave their testimony. Moreover, she had stated in her affidavit that her husband had attempted to throw her into the well. She had boasted of it, on that very first of November, to a lady friend, when the latter reminded her that nobody would believe it, as the well was covered with planks nailed to the box. Nothing daunted, that criminal woman tore off a few planks so as to give a show to her tale. This so much disgusted that lady that she likewise appeared as a witness. Already steeped in perjury, the woman swore that she could not have said such a thing to that lady

as she had not even seen her on that very day, when—lo ! four other unimpeachable witnesses appeared, who stated under oath that they had noticed her on that particular morning [it being All Saints Day] having half an hour's conversation with that lady.

The miserable wife was proven perjurious on the whole line and Judge Pardee dismissed the case with horror and disgust at such depravity and condemned her to the costs.

Under such circumstances no reconciliation was possible, and on May 1878 Mr. von Werthern filed a petition for divorce, charging his wife with a too close intimacy with the priest of her church, with adultery, visiting houses of assignation, living in open concubinate with other men, etc., and the trial was fixed for June 28, 1878.

And now Mr. FRANK Roder—*alias* Franz Roeder, the well-to-do wholesale wine and liquor merchant—enters the scene. Being the brother of that miserable wife, and fearing the disgrace the exposure of that suit would bring on the "*highly respectable*" Roder's family, he preferred the ruin of an innocent man.

Being well aware of the nature of that unjust sentence in 1876, he had Mr. von Werthern re-arrested under the plea that Governor Kellogg's pardon never had been confirmed by the Senate and that, therefore, Mr. von Werthern should serve out his original sentence of one year's confinement in the State prison.

While the latter was in the Parish prison, Mr. Frank Roder sent to him the "notorious ex-Recorder HENRY HEIDENHAIN, with the proposition to have him released if he would withdraw his divorce suit. To this Mr. von Werthern finally consented and wrote to Judge Pardee to that effect. This was all the "high respectable" Roder family wanted. Once the divorce suit withdrawn, Mr. von Werthern was no more to be feared, and with diabolic treachery they concluded to annihilate him. On the following day Mr. Frank Roder demanded through his mouthpiece—the notorious Henry Heidenhain—new and such degrading conditions that Mr. von Werthern refused to entertain them. The unjust sentence, after an elapse of two years, and after it had been changed by the former Governor was carried into execution.

The "highly respectable" Mr. Frank Roder, after having ex-

tracted from his brother-in-law, *under false pretence*, the withdrawal of his divorce suit, then left him mercilessly to his fate.

The case was finally brought to the notice of *Governor Nicholls*, who rendered a full pardon which the Senate in session *unanimously confirmed*. The Governor afterward expressed to Mr. von Werthern his extreme regret that the inflexible law had not permitted him to give the pardon before the Senate was in session.

As a further vindication of Mr. von Werthern, the remarks of two of our Senators, made in the open session of the Senate, in January 21, 1879, may be cited here.

Senator KENNER, in speaking against the "vagrant law," said :
"As an evidence to what extremes the law can go, I would refer to the case of H. von Werthern, whose pardon has been confirmed within the past hour. . . Von Werthern had worked industriously, and faithfully served his employer, That employer had not paid him his just salary for many long months, until the employer owed von Werthern six hundred dollars. After pressing the employer repeatedly for the amount due him, the latter at length gave him a check for fifty dollars, telling him to retain twenty-five dollars and return the other twenty five. Von Werthern received the whole amount and told the employer that he [the clerk] could keep the whole and deduct that amount from what he [the employer] owed him. The employer then had von Werthern arrested, etc."

Senator BREAU, speaking in favor of the "vagrant law," said :
"The case of von Werthern was unfortunate, *it was a mistake*"

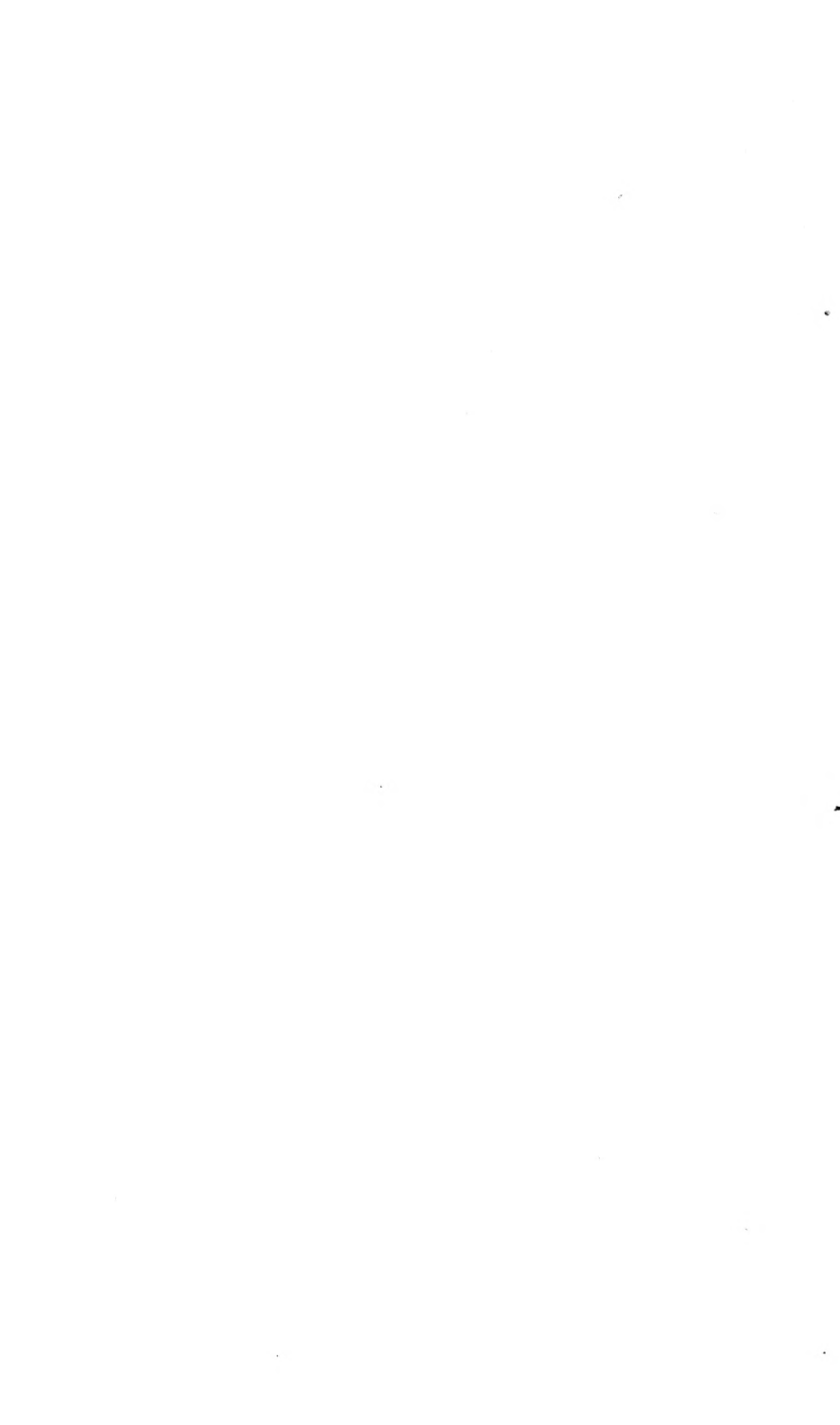
Thus Mr. von Werthern is entirely rehabilitated, his integrity re-established, and his honor remains unsullied.

But what can be said of the woman who shrinks at no means to rid herself of her husband, in order to satisfy her beastly lust freely and without hindrance with *other* men ?

And what of the "prominent and highly respectable" merchant who resorts to the basest of means to suppress the exposure of the crime of his sister ?

A HIGHLY RESPECTABLE FAMILY THIS, INDEED.

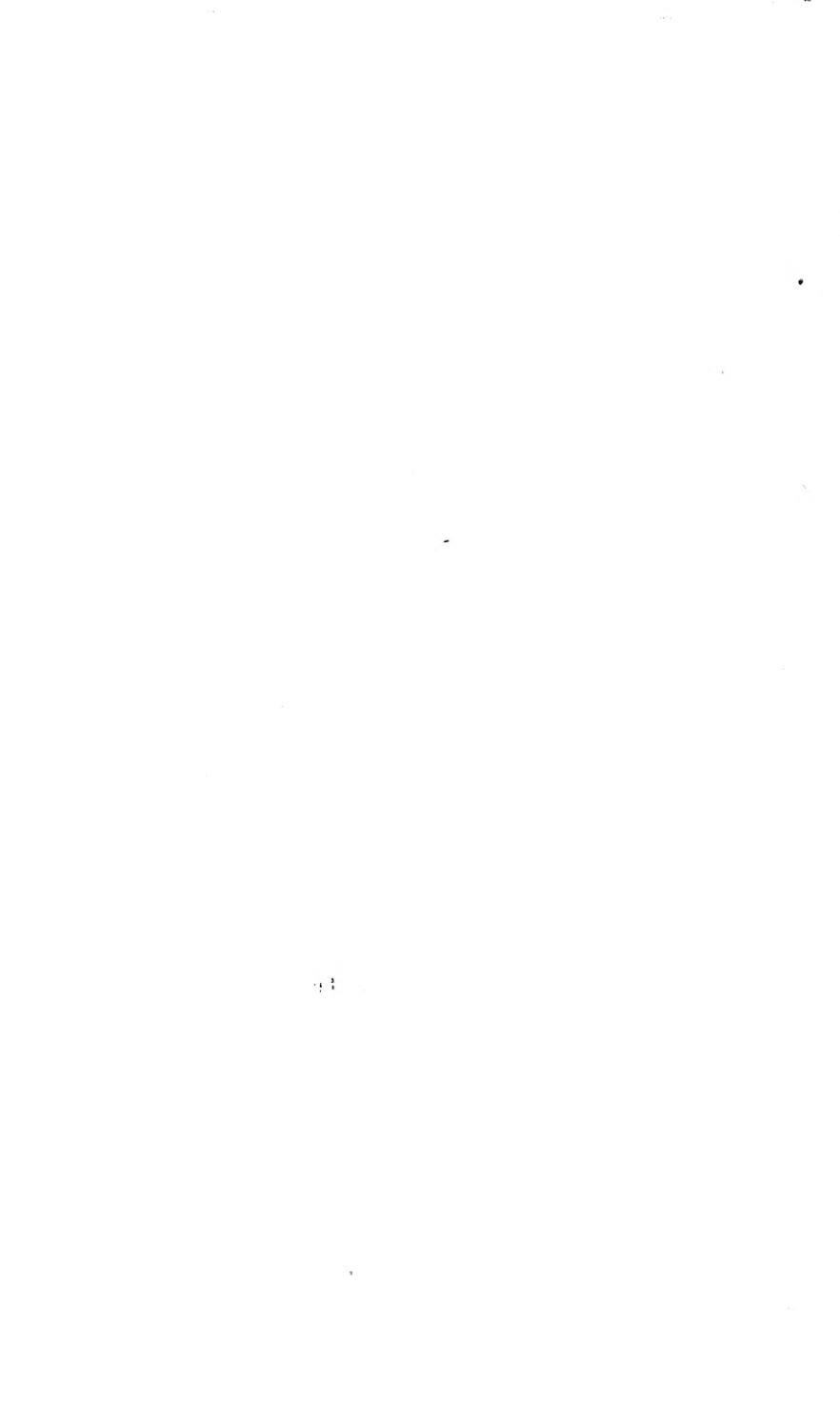












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